



Fair's fare

WORDS SARAH THOMAS

Much of the giftware and clothing in our stores is manufactured in developing countries, under a variety of conditions. But some individuals and organisations are going above and beyond to make sure the goods they provide for sale are produced ethically; a fair trade.

THE CONCEPT OF FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS has gained traction recently, but many South Australian businesses and organisations have been promoting the concept for years. Mary Jose from Fabric of Life in North Adelaide believes more can be done to promote ethical shopping, and that consumers will increasingly expect it. "Young people are much more aware of fair trade – with social media, and being at school and university, they're more exposed to different ideas. It's definitely spreading." She also thinks Adelaide could emulate some successful ideas from Sydney and Melbourne, such as a Christmas bus tour for ethical shoppers, and the *Fair@Square* festival in Federation Square.

When Mary started her shop nine years ago she wanted to help preserve cultures and traditional skills; she has also helped support entire communities. "One group in India started with six women from urban slums; now there's 600 women doing quilts, clothes and homewares. They all take turns in different roles –

management, design, stitching, marketing – so in the end they can start their own little business."

Mary sources products for her Melbourne Street store from a range of suppliers who are either fair trade-approved, or people she has visited. "Once I started travelling and meeting people who made these things, I became aware of the fair trade structure. There's a role to help modernise and develop these skills – that's what fair trade organisations do well. Some fair trade products are mass-produced, but I also think it's nice to have something that's different. Everything I stock is hand-picked and handmade."

She says the internet has made it much easier to source products from previously isolated communities, and an area where she hopes to see improvement is ethical fashion. "The environmental aspect is quite a big part of fair trade too, things being recycled and not wasted. Clothes are so prone to being made in sweatshops with bad production processes both environmentally, and for people. There's a lot of scope for that to improve and change."